



U.S. Department of Justice

**Ronald C. Machen Jr.**  
*United States Attorney for the  
District of Columbia*

*Judiciary Center  
555 Fourth St. N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20530*

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **For Information Contact:**

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### **Man Sentenced For Using Fake Diplomatic Tags - Claimed "Diplomatic Immunity" When Stopped for Speeding -**

WASHINGTON - Nicholas Marino, 24, of Washington, D.C., was sentenced today to two years' probation after admitting that he purchased and used fake diplomatic license tags, announced U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr., John W. Schilling, Special Agent in Charge of the Washington Field Office of the U.S. State Department's Diplomatic Security Service, and Jeffrey W. Irvine, Special Agent in Charge, Washington Field Office, U.S. Secret Service.

Marino pleaded guilty on July 21, 2010 to one count of unauthorized possession of official badges, identification or other insignia. He was sentenced today by the Honorable Richard J. Leon in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. In addition to completing probation, Marino was ordered to perform 240 hours of community service, pay a \$500 fine, and follow a curfew that requires him to be at home from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. for 180 days.

According to facts presented to the Court, Marino was driving a Mitsubishi SUV with what appeared to be U.S. diplomatic tags when he was caught speeding by a U.S. Secret Service officer. The traffic stop took place about 2:35 a.m. Nov. 20, 2009 in the 2000 block of 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW. Marino told the officer that he was a diplomat from the Italian embassy and claimed that he had diplomatic immunity. After checking with the U.S. Department of State, the officer determined that Marino was not a diplomat. The "diplomatic tags" were not registered to the vehicle, and the vehicle was not the property of the Italian embassy.

Marino was given a citation to appear in court in December 2009 on motor vehicle offenses. The SUV, meanwhile, was impounded for safekeeping and the diplomatic tags were recovered as evidence. Agents from the State Department's Diplomatic Security Service subsequently examined the tags. They determined that the tags – which included a representation of the Department of State's seal – were forgeries.

On Nov. 24, 2009, an investigator interviewed Marino, who admitted that he was not a diplomat and that he had purchased the forged diplomatic tags for his car. He said he got them in

June 2009 from a store kiosk in Kennesaw, Ga. that makes novelty plates. In addition to the tags, Marino had found a picture of the Department of State's seal on the Internet, made a copy of the seal on sticker paper, and affixed it to the back of his driver's license.

In announcing the sentence, U.S. Attorney Machen commended the work of Special Agents Paul Brown and Douglas Aronson of the Department of State, as well as Assistant U.S. Attorneys Cassidy Pinegar, Shana Fulton and Frederick Yette, who handled the case at various stages of the prosecution.

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